

Message Text

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67

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SY-05

SCCT-01 SSO-00 /062 W

----- 081021

R 011019Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9327

INFO COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK

CINCPAC HONOLULU

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

AMCONSUL UDORN

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PORS PGOV PINS TH

SUBJECT: MURDER OF SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL

REF: A) 75 BANGKOK A-160 (6/3/75) B BANGKOK 3902 C)

BANGKOK 1817

1. DR. BUNSANONG BUNYOTHAYAN, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF THAILAND, WAS ASSASSINATED EARLY ON THE MORNING OF FEBRUARY 28. THE 39 YEAR OLD LEFTIST POLITICIAN WAS KILLED WHILE DRIVING HOME FROM A DINNER PARTY GIVEN BY A SECOND SECRETARY OF THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY. AS HE ATTEMPTED TO TURN INTO THE LANE LEADING TO HIS HOUSE, HIS WAY WAS BLOCKED BY A TRUCK, AND HE WAS TWICE SHOT BY TWO MEN ON A MOTORCYCLE. HE DIED ON THE WAY TO THE HOSPITAL.

2. BUNSANENG IS BEING CALLED THE "BRAINS" OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY IN NEWSPAPER ARTICLES AND OBITUARY
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EDITORIALS, BUT THIS IS PROBABLY AN OVERSTATEMENT. HE

CERTAINLY WAS A WELL EDUCATED MAN, AND HAD A MORE DETAILED KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIALISM THAN MANY OF HIS COLLEGUES, BUT HE WAS SUPPORTED BY ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL FACTIONS IN THE PARTY. AT ONE POINT LAST YEAR, REPORTS CIRCULATED THAT HE WAS UNDER PRESSURE TO STEP DOWN FROM HIS POST, AND HIS FAMILY WAS ENCOURAGING HIM TO RETURN TO HIS TEACHING CAREER. IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT HE HAD BEEN PLANNING TO TAKE A POSITION AT KASSETASAT UNIVERSITY. (SEE REF. A FOR BIO MATERIAL.)

3. WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN THREE OTHER POLITICALLY MOTIVATED ASSASSINATIONS IN THAILAND RECENTLY (REF B), BUNSANONG IS THE FIRST PROMINENT POLITICIAN ASSASSINATED IN THAILAND SINCE THE 1950'S. IT IS NOT CLEAR YET WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MURDER, BUT MANY SUSPECT THE RIGHT WING NAWAPHON OR SOME SIMILAR ORGANIZATION. POLICE ARE EXPECTED TO HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME IN SOLVING THE CASE, BUT A POLICE OFFICIAL TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT THERE WERE SEVERAL CLUES AND A NUMBER OF WITNESSES, AND THERE WAS A CHANCE THAT THE GUILTY PARTIES WOULD BE CAUGHT. PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT, EXPRESSING HIS SADNESS OVER THE EVENT, ORDERED THE POLICE TO MAKE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO SOLVE THE CASE QUICKLY.

4. LEFTISTS AND STUDENT ACTIVISTS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO USE THE MURDER IN THEIR PROPAGANDA. WHILE MANY GENUINELY MOURN BUNSANONG'S DEATH, OTHERS DO NOT SEEM UNHAPPY AT THE UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY TO ATTACK THE RIGHT WING. THE OCCASION OF THE FUNERAL WAS USED AS A VEHICLE TO ACCUSE THE CIA OF ORDERING THE KILLING BECAUSE OF BUNSANONG'S OPPOSITION TO A CONTINUED U.S. TROOP PRESENCE. OTHERS SUGGESTED THAT THE DEATH WAS PART OF A PLAN TO REESTABLISH A DICTATORIAL REGIME.

5. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ASSESS AT THIS TIME WHAT EFFECT THE ASSASSINATION WILL HAVE ON THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. THE LEFT WILL CERTAINLY ATTEMPT TO EXPLOIT WHATEVER SYMPATHY COMES FROM THE PUBLIC, BUT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ESTIMATE HOW BENEFICIAL THIS WILL BE TO THEM ON APRIL 4. SOCIALISTS AND STUDENT ACTIVISTS ARE HOLDING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MEETINGS AND DISCUSSIONS TO DECIDE WHAT ACTION TO TAKE, BUT THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS SO FAR THAT ANY DEMONSTRATIONS OR PUBLIC PROTESTS ARE PLANNED. THEY WILL BE MORE LIKELY, HOWEVER, IF THE POLICE FAIL TO MAKE ANY HEADWAY IN THEIR INVESTIGATION.

6. WHILE BUNSANONG HAD OCCASIONALLY BEEN CRITICAL OF THE U.S., HE WAS NOT REPEAT NOT GENERALLY ANTI-AMERICAN

IN OUTLOOK. BOTH HE AND HIS WIFE WERE AWARDED PH.D.
DEGREES BY CORNELL, AND BOTH HAD PERIODICALLY BEEN IN TOUCH
WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS.
WHITEHOUSE

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NNN

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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
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Margaret P. Grafeld
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